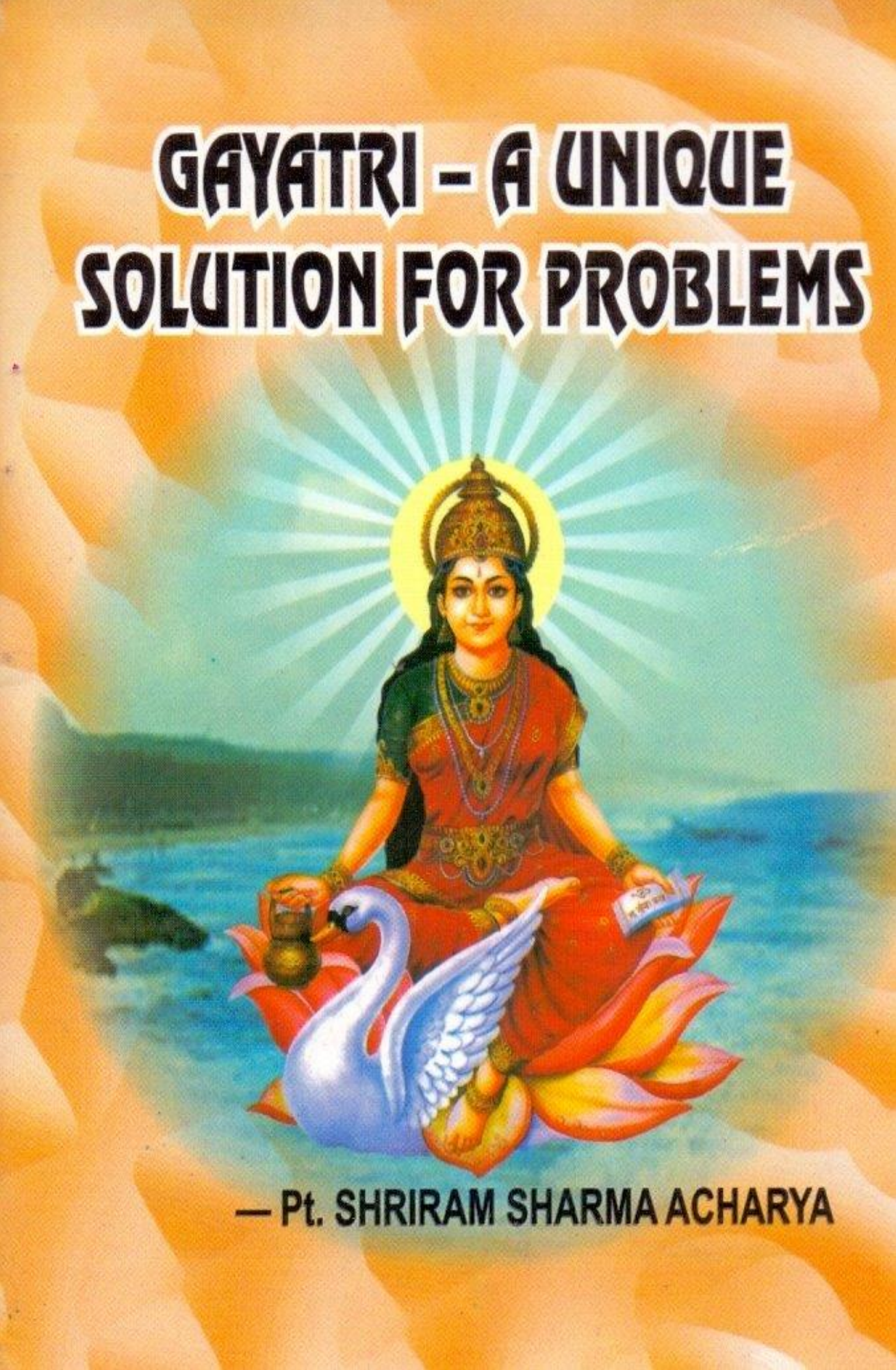
GAYATRI - A UNIQUE SOLUTION FOR PROBLEMS



— Pt. SHRIRAM SHARMA ACHARYA

It is absolutely easy to be liberated from sins by Gayatri worship. The speciality of Gayatri worship is that when the resonance of the innate powers within its 24 letters occurs within the heart, the sattogun (virtue) within thoughts increases day-by-day and as a result changes occur in the nature and programme of the person. One in whose heart virtuous thoughts increase, the same excellence will also be there in his deeds.

A person's nature is not any definite or permanent thing. It keeps on changing according to situations and sentiments. It is not necessary that a person who is sinful to-day will remain sinful throughout life. Similarly it cannot also be said that a person who is a gentleman with good conduct to-day, will remain so in future also.

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Situations and sentiments can bring about such a change in a person that he will appear completely transformed.

Sin is a type of mental condition and habit. It is within man's power to give up sin by strength of mind. The mental strength necessary for the change by giving up sin, is created in promising measure by Gayatri-worship and the means for inner transformation become easily available. Liberation from sins is as easy as shaving one's beard. It is not proper for a sinful person to think that - since he has been on the wrong path upto now and adopted sinful thoughts and performed bad deeds, how is his reform possible? This disappointment is improper because every fallen person can rise up, every sinner can become pure.

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Many a times it is seen that man performs wicked deeds because of helplessness, ignorance, bad company, curiosity or force of circumstances. At that time, he does not think that such sin is terrible. Afterwards, with his mental development, the same wickedness appears very horrible. But because those sinful acts were carried out because of wretched mental condition, the related punishment is also small. According to man's conscience, compassion is felt at the time of killing, therefore it is a sin for him. In man's mental situations too there can be small or big variations due to various reasons. During such mental conditions sins committed in mental weakness due to ignorance are not considered serious in the eyes of God although traditionally believed to be so.

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Sometimes it so happens that with good intentions, a man performs some deeds which - according to traditional code of conduct - are considered very big sins. But when looked at judicially, they are not considered so despicable, but many a time not only forgivable but the same bad acts become praiseworthy also. When a person kills someone for robbing his wealth, it becomes a terrible sin. A judge of some court of law passes a death-sentence on some anti-social person for protecting the rule of law and an executioner carries out the sentence — they are performing their duties. If someone risks his life to save someone from terrorists and kills them, then it becomes a virtue. All the three have 'killed' some life, but the killings are with different results, therefore all three are not considered sinful in the same way.

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Stealing is a bad act. But according to circumstances, that too does not remain a bad deed. One who is prosperous and yet unjustly robs others is decidedly a thief. Take another example — in a situation of loss of life through severe hunger, if a person tries to protect his life by robbing something from a prosperous man, it is no big sin. In a third situation, by robbing a wicked person of his means, making him powerless and putting such means to good use is an act of virtue. All the three thieves cannot be treated as sinners at the same level.

Many a time — because of situations, helplessness, necessity for religious protection or little intellectual development - such acts are performed which appear damnable, but the intention behind them is not sinful. Such acts cannot be termed as sins.

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Among those who can be included in the list of sinners, most people are such that they had to perform undesirable acts because of some of the above reasons, but later on they became normal. They became helpless because of situations, lack of solutions, and habits, and slipped into wickedness. They would have definitely become good individuals if they were in good situations, or received good facilities and obtained proper means for progress and satisfaction.

Howsoever sinful a person in the eyes of law and public opinion, but in reality the number of sinners in this world is very small. People who became wicked because of the force of circumstances can be reformed because every soul is pure because the soul is a part of God.

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Many people think that they have committed so many sins, such wicked deeds and the list of their known and unknown sins is so big, that they cannot be reformed, so how can they achieve salvation? People who think in this manner should know that as soon as they take a vow to walk on the path of good deeds, the old dirty lice-ridden cloak of vices is automatically cast off. By shedding off of sins and desires and sincerely repenting for them, we are liberated from the bad results of our bad deeds. Only those fruits of acts of our past births which are destined to be borne as prarabdha (fate), have to be borne at some time or other during this life. In addition, these can also become the vehicles of more sins. The punishment under God's law of fate can be lightened by not resorting to wickedness and repenting for earlier sins and it is also possible to be forgiven.

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The mental strength through Gayatri-worship definitely helps to remove innumerable bad tendencies, habits and sinful attitudes of the worshipper. Many people ask, "I have so-and-so bad tendency, I have not paid any attention to avoiding non-vegetarian food, I have committed certain bad deeds. Can I be deserving of Gayatri-worshp?'' Such people should very well understand that Gayatri is a kind of soap. When soap has been created for removing dirt, then it is useless to think whether dirty clothing deserves the use of soap. The use of Gayatri is like a spiritual soap to remove the bad impressions and influences and dualities and controversies within the mind. Hence a sinful person should not hesitate to use it.

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Liberation from evil tendencies is definite and easy with inner transformation. It is not impossible nor surprising if to-day's sinner becomes a saint to-morrow. Authors of scriptures have told this straight-forward tale with great emphasis on the destruction of sins through Gayatri-worship.

If it is understood that one can be freed from the punishment for past deeds by certain means, then evil people will go on committing sins and then resort to the above means by thinking that now their past sins have been annihilated. They will think of further committing the sinful acts and resorting to the prayers for destroying the sins thus mistakenly thinking that they will get the benefit from their bad deeds and simultaneously get the added benefit of freedom from the sins.

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One must remove this misconception from its roots. If man goes on committing more sins, he remains sinful only. There is no question of his sins being washed out through prayers if simultaneously he commits sins also. When man starts despising sinful acts and saves himself from bad thoughts - like cleansing from urine and faeces - then on achieving this state of mind, he will not have the inclination to adopt the path of sin. He will not expect that God will accept a small bribe of prayers and forgive his continuity of sins.

But in God's office, those persons' cases are considered with a liberal attitude, who have given up bad deeds, and not only given up bad tendencies but repented for past mistakes.

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For the banishment of crimes, the rule of punishment is put into effect - when children do something wrong, the mother scolds them, when a disciple becomes tardy, the teacher takes up the cane, when the societal rules are disturbed, the local council dispenses punishment, when the low is broken, fines, jail, extemment or death-sentence is there. God has provided for punishment of sins through punishment from deities, bodily ailments and material wants or scarcity. This rule of law is not meant as revenge or 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for - a- tooth', but it is created on the basis of high spiritual science. The reason is that as a result of the unhappiness caused by 'punishment' there is a commotion within man's mind, a certain reaction, which shocks his hidden thinking and he gives up the faulty path to return to the proper path.

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Through punishment from others, we are forced to commit penance for our purification. If we willingly adopt this method for ourselves, willingly undergo penance for our open and hidden sins, then it is innumerable times better compared to the penance forced on because of others. There is neither insult, nor revenge nor dejection - instead, because of wilful penance there is spiritual joy, and valour and courage manifest and our prestige increases in the eyes of others. The fire of the soul is required for the eradication of sins. The creation of this fire gives double benefits, one — destruction of harmful tendencies, sins, two - development, nourishment and increase in divine qualities through the same warmth and brightness, and as a result the seeker becomes an ascetic, mentally strong and luminous.

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In our scriptures, at every step of life, some ritual, fast (including prayers), charity, bath, code of thinking and conduct etc are considered in detail with this in view so by adopting them, the seeker can get these double benefits.

If we have committed some mistake, sin or wicked act, then the real solution for removing their bad effects is that we make a firm resolve not to do such a thing again. In addition if a little penance is also performed, then that resolve gets a boost and its implemention becomes firmer. Alongwith this, an attitude of a life of virtue gains momentum, creates vitality and creates better and better nature, deeds and qualities through which a life of purity, devotion and goodwill becomes easy. In this manner a penance based on the strength of Gayatri can wash out even the biggest sins.

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Is it possible to wash out one's sins or not? When thinking on this question we must very well understand that the soul is clean, pure, unadulterated, knowledgeable and unattached. Transparent glass and transparent vessels are by themselves pure, they do not have any colour, but if you put any coloured water in it, then the vessel will look as if it has that colour. If water with another colour is added, the colour will once again change. Man is also in a similar situation. By its very nature, the soul is without any fault, but it appears according to the qualities, deeds or attitudes enveloping it.

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The soul is always faultless , it is changeless - only the mind, intelligence , chitta (the part of the mind concentration with concentration) and the ego get 'coloured' due to various influences, and because of them man appears unnatural, wretched and perverted. If a change is brought in this condition, it is not difficult for to-day's 'wicked man' to become a to-morrow's saint.

A man who has spent most of his past life on the wrong path or has whiled away most of his life, cannot achieve any purpose by feeling unhappy, disappointed or by repenting. The remaining part of life is no less important. The king Parikshit had only one week of his life left. He utilised this period purposefully with full determination and obtained what he wanted — beneficial salvation.

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It is a palpable truth that compared to the people termed 'straight' such as mentally retarded, fools, cowards and people with weak health those who are active , alert, vital, valorous and diligent are able to achieve spiritual progress faster. The reason is that in people with low vitality, the source of energy has very limited capacity. Even if they remain devotees and of pure conduct, even then because of less innate energy, their progress is extremely slow. But those who are energetic,and have within themselves the dynamo of vitality and valour - whenever they act in any direction, will achieve heaps of success. Those who have kept their flag flying high in roguish acts, are definitely powerful, but their energy is misdirected. If this same energy is utilised in good deeds, then they can, achieve astonishing success in that direction also.

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Spiritual progress is also one type of diligence. Only those people can go along this path whose muscles have strength, who are industrious and have tremendous courage and enthusiasm.

The loving lap of mother Gayatri is always there even for those who have strayed from the path, walked along the road of wickedness and have carried out innumerable bad deeds. If they repent for their past deeds, take a vow not to repeat them, and are eager to walk the good path, then they can once again get back their natural spiritual qualities and purity. There is definite progress on this path through Gayatri-worship. Even though all the bad tendencies will not disappear together, but the bad tendencies will gradually diminish in proportion to the power of prayers Gayatri worship invariably results in improvement of good qualities, good thoughts and good deeds.

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It is evident that most unhappiness in this world is a result of our sins. Many a time our deeds give immediate results - in the form of assault by people whom we have harmed, or by social disgrace, loss or harm resulting from dissatisfaction and non-co-operation from people or from punishment by the State. Even if someone escapes from all these, nobody can save himself from God's impartial justice. It can be easily inferred by looking at physically and mentally handicapped, sub-normal, chronically ill persons that these people are suffering divine punishment. When carrying out our duties properly, sometimes a sudden crisis confronts us or success is not there despite efforts, then we are forced to say that this is fate as a result of deeds in our past births.

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We should deal with others in the same manner as we expect others to deal with us. We should consciously strive to save ourselves from achieving our interests at the cost of harming others.

Gayatri is that alarm-bell which tells us not to walk on the path of sin. God is present everywhere, he does not take sides. Not a single sin of yours remains hidden from him, nor can you save yourself from the effects of any sin. **Aum bhoor bhoovaha swaha,** these words in the first line of the mantra constantly teach us that we should always deal with others with friendliness, warmth,love, generosity, honesty, helpfulness and pleasance. One whom Mother Gayatri has blessed with this attitude will undoubtedly be released from many social afflictions.

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People do not co-operate with us to the required extent our family members neighbours and near ones–if there is opposition, malice, conflict and quarrel with them. When we expect goodwill from them, even then it is not available. Instead, because they are our opponents, they go on creating obstacles and will not miss any opportunity for conspiring to harm us. Injuries like court-cases, theft, dacoity, killings, boycott, insult, complaint, back-biting, slander, fault-finding are rarely accidental - most of the time there is the deep malice of old enmity working behind it. Mostly a dissatisfied or malicious person's hand is behind such activities.

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The biggest obstacle in our progress is that those who are capable of helping us, withdraw their helping hand. If a few persons give their backing to someone, he can achieve promising progress with a little help from them. An important reason for the success of all the successful people in the world is their assistants. A person may be highly learned, extremely intelligent, clever and powerful, but in the absence of co-operation, he cannot achieve anything important and will become handicapped. Non-co-operation may not be as harmful as malice, but that too can become a mountain-like obstacle for progress. Malice is a virulent disease, non-cooperation is a mild disease, both belong to the same caste, the difference is only in degree, but the result of both is undesirable.

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Some persons are extremely wicked. It is essential to keep them under control, to put fear into their hearts, to punish them or to make them helpless in order to give up their evil ways. But this kind of strength is not possible in just one person. They have to be curbed by people's will only. The power or strength required for creating the people's will in our favour and getting their co-operation, cannot be achieved without our own excellent nature. Even though we are right, a court-case is simply dismissed in the absence of witnesses and in cases with false-charges, we are punished. With our good qualities if we can organise the necessary friends, then we can get an evil person punished by the State or we can thoroughly punish him. But if we do not have people in large numbers with their will and organisation on our side, then even a wretched person can harass us endlessly.

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Friendliness means dealing with others with sincerity. This is that weapon by which many people can be charmed. Many crafty people take undue advantage and cheat us because of such sincerity, but it does not cause much harm. Because of being fooled in this way, our fame, saintliness and reputation increases, which later on gives much more benefits compared to the earlier harm.

A person's hard fate becomes bearable when he has more co-operative friends and relatives. Divinely-ordained troubles destined to be suffered invariably, will certainly come our way, but with the chanting of first quarter of Gayatri mantra (which bestows good nature on us), these too can be borne despite troubles.

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With the passing away of the near and dear ones, many people become intensely unhappy and they lament the separation day and night. The reason for this mourning is discarding of the sentiment of nearness and getting trapped in attachment. The feeling of nearness is a generous and all-encompassing element. In this type of feeling, our family members are considered as God's gift and a medium for fulfilment of our service. One who understands in this way will not feel unhappy when the soul of a person (who is a part of God) performs the normal process of changing the body. If God takes away one medium of service, we can always serve someone else. The principal reason for unhappiness is that because of the shock of the death of someone, we lose our composure and think of the dead near one as our property and think that we have suffered a loss in our joy, self-interest, hope etc.

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Momentary happiness is very attractive, charming and tempting. A person with a narrow view-point gets tempted in it and suffers very much like birds tempted by grains and trapped in a hunter's net. Gayatri warns us about the pitfalls of this temptation and teaches, "Son, you are not the body, but the soul. Do not obstruct the path of spiritual salvation by becoming a victim of greed, indulgence of desires and senses, and temptations. Look to your permanent benefits and interests and sacrifice your temptations. Sensual pleasures are momentary but their bad effects remain for a long time. The happiness of being wealthy remains only for a short time, but the wickedness taught by immorally earned wealth, and the thorns sown for the future - their bad results live on for a long time. Such short-sighted persons get trapped into many types of addictions.

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One who has faith on Gayatri, becomes a far-seeing person or visionary by obeying the second instruction of the Mother in the second part of the mantra. By understanding that addictions kill the vitality of life or life itself, he immediately becomes resolute to discard them. He becomes an opponent of the habits of intoxicants. If he is addicted to such a substance, he gives it up courageously and cautions others against the same. By controlling his lust and tongue, he uses them sparingly and with sagacity. He adopts the policy of observing strict celibacy for a long time and eating only simple food at regular time only. By resorting to fasts, he controls all the senses. He prepares his busy schedule by being careful that not a single moment should be wasted and every moment fruitfully utilised. He loves labour like his own life and feels happy by doing work personally.

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One who saves himself from addictions, bad habits, laziness and indiscipline does not suffer from ill-health. If some past disease has lingered, that too disappears quickly or becomes less intense. The vitality of disciplined persons is not wasted unnecessarily, therefore they lead a long life. Since laziness disappears, the various organs work till the end. Cheerfulness of mind, earning capacity etc are firmly linked with good health. An ill person is deprived of all these, but healthy people progress in many directions and enjoy life effortlessly. Problem-solver Gayatri mantra's second portion removes in no time the troubles caused by ill-health.

The second portion of Gayatri takes us to that position in which a person enjoys in peace the joy which is his birthright.

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People are not free for self-study, do not have time for physical exercise, do not get time for worship, cannot tear themselves away from 'work' for public service, do not have time for music which elates the mind, and no time for travel, swimming or meeting saints. The reason is only one, viz, that in comparison to their principal activity, such people consider all the above as extremely petty and do not consider them worth for any attention. Leisure is not available for only that work which is not considered essential or important. The work which we consider essential, we finish it first while ignoring others. When the attraction for money is extremely powerful, one does not get the leisure for making one's life happy and lofty.

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life's progress in all aspects is only possible when the attraction for wealth is reduced and money is not considered as the goal but as only a means. The following are no less important than earning money - learning, maintenance of health, developing one's worth and capacities, increasing inner enthusiasm by quiet humour, developing one's own nature, to fulfil one's social obligations, to devote one's time for social service **and above all spiritual reflection.** For these activities also the same time and mental energy should be applied as utilised for earning money. But it is possible only when the over-importance given to money is reduced to realistic proportion. Material goods should also be given importance only in proportion to their usefulness. Our main direction of aim should be towards attaining good qualities and specialities

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Good intelligent thinking unravels many tangles in our life and roots out many troubles very easily. Many people, unhappy over lack of money or progeny, when they think over the **third part of the Gayatri mantra,** their eyes open up and they are able to realise their mistakes. Then they start thinking that lack of these things or their existing in a limited way is not a bad situation. Because of this lack, they are able to get the required time and opportunity for progressing in other directions. They are saved from many worries, burdens and wicked acts. A man with just enough income indeed gains more benefits compared to the man who plunges into day-and-night activities of earning 'by any means' for possessing a lot of wealth and comforts. When the light of Gayatri increases in our head, then poverty, wretchedness, feeling of inferiority and wants, start reducing.

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The message of the **fourth portion of Gayatri** is that we should intelligently utilise favourable and unfavourable situations, we should expect the best future and be prepared to face the worst. If we think of difficulties as only challenges for increasing our efforts, and do not become afraid, then certainly no unpleasant situation can make us unhappy and will not be an obstacle for our cheer. If we adopt the good thinking of remaining cheerful, then we will be easily freed from the bad tendency of becoming unhappy for petty reasons. Life is for playing with a spirit of sportsmanship. Actors perform various roles on the stage but are personally not influenced by the character which they portray. Life has to be carried on in the same spirit.

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When God takes someone under his shelter, whom He wishes to liberate, He makes the fate of such a person bearable so that such devotees quickly become liberated from the burdens of the acts of the past births - thus liberated, the soul does not have to be drawn into the vicious circle of births and deaths. On the one hand, the burden of past-births' deeds is over and on the other hand, his inner purity goes on increasing. Because of these benefits on both sides, he progresses with great speed towards the ultimate goal.

Ordinarily, God makes one undergo many bitter experiences for the development of many good qualities. Because of the death of one's own child, the element of pure love flowers forth in the lament of mourning and such a person wishes to shower more love on other children.

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